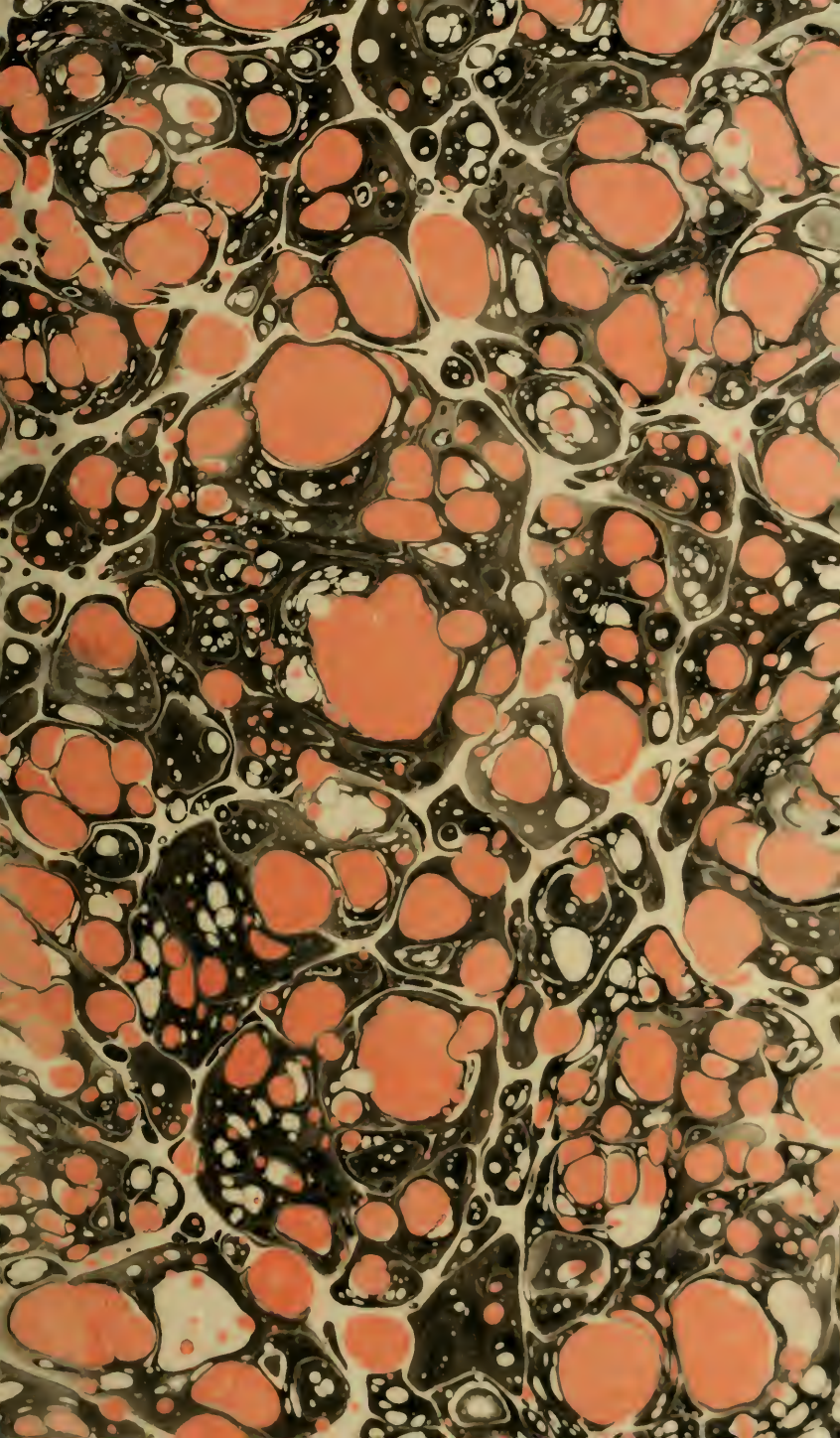




special
collections
DOUGLAS
Library



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
AT KINGSTON
Presented by

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA



A
CANDID ENQUIRY
INTO THE
PRESENT RUINED STATE
OF THE
FRENCH MONARCHY.

WITH
REMARKS
ON THE

Late despotick Reduction of the Interest of the
National Debt of FRANCE.

“ Pour que l'état monarchique se soutienne, le luxe doit aller en croissant, du laboureur à l'artisan, au negociant, aux nobles, aux magistrats, aux grands seigneurs, aux traitans principaux, aux princes, sans quoi tout seroit perdu.”

MONTESQUIEU.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ALMON, opposite Burlington House in Piccadilly.

M DCC LXX.

AC 911.1770.C36

P R E F A C E

E Y T H E

E D I T O R.

THE following letter was lately received from an English gentleman, who now resides, and has the greatest part of his life resided in France.

The person to whom it was wrote, presuming that all national power, and the happiness of individuals, are merely relative, and best known by comparison, he has, without any motive of private interest, given it to the publick, as he will do some other letters, which shortly he expects to receive on the same subject.

Every candid, impartial man will then judge, if there is any resemblance of the healthy florid, portrait, that was given the last winter of the French monarchy, by a timorous, depending party in this country under the title of **THE PRESENT STATE OF THE NATION.**

That

Your Lordship is pleased to tell me, that my arguments first gave you conviction of the mistake you had long been in, of entertaining too high notions of the present power and greatness of the French nation; and now desire me to transmit to you in writing those arguments, to convince some of your friends of birth and high rank in England, who are also prepossessed with the same too favourable, but ill-grounded opinion of the power of France.

But though a compliance with your Lordship's request will afford no small pleasure to myself; and though I have resided in this country the greatest part of my life, and been in the occasion to see the interior state of the government of France, its operations and effects, at no great distance, yet I fear your Lordship has desired of me a task, almost incompatible with those few hours which my health will permit me to devote to so great an undertaking.

A de-

A declining state of health, now more than twenty years ago, was, as your Lordship may remember, my first inducement to reside in this country; when from sickness, and a want of relish for the pleasures and gaieties of the world, I resolved to divert my hours by more rational and beneficial amusements, and to gratify my curiosity by acquiring a clearer conception and knowledge of men and things; and in the pursuit of which nothing has afforded me greater pleasure and instruction, than an enquiry into the causes that have most apparently contributed to the increase and progress of national strength and power; and also to the decline of those states and kingdoms, which, for a time, had dazzled and awed the world with their splendor and greatness, and then as rapidly sunk again into that obscurity and unimportance, from which originally they arose.

In perusing history, my Lord, I have found it to be little else than a recapitula-

tion of the perpetually fluctuating state of national power and greatness ; and that all states and kingdoms have arose, and again declined, from almost similar causes.

The glory and magnificence of the Greek and Roman empires, and of many other antient nations, which now lie buried in oblivion, we shall have no need to mention, as we shall find in some of our neighbouring states, wherein we are much more interested, sufficient to gratify our curiosity on this subject. The rapid decline of the Spanish and French monarchies, which have, in the two last centuries, acted the most distinguished parts in the affairs of Europe, are more immediate objects of our attention ; and to the latter of these nations I shall, according to your Lordship's desire, confine my thoughts in this, and the *future* letters, I shall have the honour of transmitting to you.

After the dread of universal empire, caused by Charles the Fifth of Spain, and the profuse, extravagant conduct of his son,

son, Philip the Second, the balance of power in Europe seemed to be so equally poised, as to remove any danger or fear of such universal conquests, as had in former ages rendered so many nations slaves to the power and vanity of one prince.

Louis the Fourteenth, of France was the last sovereign in Europe, who alarmed the other princes in it with the danger of universal monarchy. Born at a time when all the neighbouring courts were sunk into a state of supinencs and inactivity, favourable to the projects of a young ambitious monarch, he did not fail to take the advantage of it, and indulge the fondness he received from nature, of displaying his power, and acting the tyrant.

His ambition was indeed well supported by the abilities of his ministers, and the talents of his generals ; but after making, for more than half a century, such efforts in war, and such profuse expences in peace, as none of his predecessors had ever attempted, he lost, in the decline of life,
that

that brilliant reputation of a great sovereign, with which, in the meridian of his reign, he had imposed upon and over-awed all Europe; and he descended to his grave, not with the character of a great or wise prince, but of the best *actor* of majesty that ever sat upon a throne.

The wise administrations of Richlieu and Mazarine, the decline of the power of Spain, and many other causes, conspired together to give him a power and superiority, with which he long insulted all his neighbours.

By nature turbulent, haughty, and insolent, he at last became as odious to all Europe, as he ought to have been detestable to his own people, for the wanton, profuse manner in which he trifled away their blood and their treasure.

But from the splendor of his court, the magnificence of his buildings, the encouragement of arts, and by all the exterior pomp and appearance of glory and superior greatness, the people, through their national vanity, were so intoxicated, and the
delusion

delusion amongst them was so general, till the last years of his reign, that, even amongst the sober thinking men, very few of them, I believe, saw half the fatal consequences that would, in time, attend a reign of more than fifty years of the most absurd profusion, and ridiculous splendor, that the western nations had ever been witness to.

Louis the Fourteenth of France, like Philip the Second of Spain, left his successor a ruined nation. He left him, what was worse, his example and his principles of government, founded in ambition, in pride, in ostentation, and all the ridiculous shew and pageantry of state.

The regent of France, during the minority of the present king, by nature giddy, bold, and intrepid, ignorant of the distresses to which the nation, by the expensive war for the Spanish succession, was reduced, and hurried on by ambition to act the part of a sovereign, attempted, a few years after the tranquility of Europe was settled by the peace of Utrecht,

to

to tear that crown from the brows of a prince of Bourbon, settled on the throne of Spain, which Louis the Fourteenth had exhausted the very vitals of his country to place there. The regent still did worse. Uninformed of, and a stranger to the wise principles of a modern statesman, he gave *public credit* many fatal wounds, which still are bleeding; and wantonly committed as many mistakes and frolicks with the finances of the nation, and the private fortunes of the people, as could well be pressed into so short an administration; for he expired, according to the anecdotes I have heard, in a rapture of pleasure, in the arms of his mistress, in the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty-two.

The conduct of the regent, during the memorable transactions of the Mississippi scheme, will ever remain a monument of his folly, injustice, and ambition. The wounds he then gave to the credit of France, were bitterly felt during the late war. They are still felt, and will continue

tinue to be so, whilst all the vices of the present form of government continue to subsist in the nation.

The present monarch of France, tho' untainted with the vain ambition of a hero and a conqueror, hath, by the restless temper and haughty disposition of his ministers, been involved, since his accession, in two such expensive wars as hath entirely effused the small share of strength and vigour, which the nation had recruited by the long peace that preceded them; and by the violent efforts he made in both, so superior to, and inconsistent with, the debilitated strength of his state, that from a progress of the original vices of the government, the ruined condition of the landed interest, the heavy load of national debt, and the entire loss of public credit, the French nation is now reduced to a more consumptive and exhausted state than she ever was before involved in: and as all the great pillars of the state are now become corrupted and decayed, with an enormous weight of distresses pressing

C

upon

upon them, we shall, without the interposition of Providence, or some essential revolutions and changes in the present form and mode of her government, see, even in our own days, the French nation sink into the same state of nerveless indigence and poverty, which the Spanish monarchy hath long been buried in.

. Insensible of their approaching fate, with a levity and folly constitutional to all ranks of that people, the present court of France have adopted the same splendid and ambitious notions of government, with which they had, during the happier and more vigorous times of the late reign, dazzled and imposed upon all their neighbours: but the deception, however, is now confined to themselves; and to such superficial statesmen and people of other countries, who take appearances for realities, and judge of the present power of France, from those short and transient periods of greatness, which shone forth with so much lustre during the meridian of the last reign:

The

The power by which they formerly, with so much insolence and haughtiness, took the lead in all the affairs of Europe, is now no more : the ambition only remains. To support appearances, they are now forced to strain every nerve of government ; they maintain unnecessary, formidable armies, a splendid magnificent court, and in every department of the state, a most enormous and extravagant peace establishment, for the empty consolation of imposing upon their own people, and some of their rivals, with the appearances of a power, which (I hope to prove to your Lordship) is no more natural, or the effects of health and vigour, than the rouge, which is dawbed upon the face of a tawdry antiquated Duchess at Versailles is of youth and beauty ; who may, in the justest sense of an allegory, be looked upon as an emblematic figure of the present state and political government of France ; she, in her happier days, might have made conquests, and been an object of admiration ; but to attempt it in the decline of

life, when nature is exhausted, and health and beauty fled, by the arts only of the toilette, is such an imposition upon common sense, as raises no passions but contempt and ridicule.

The affairs of government in this country, my Lord, are all deception and delusion; and individuals, like the government, from their national vanity, and the example of their monarch, always live far above their estates and fortunes: but tho' all their magnificence is no more than splendid poverty, yet, so much do the French ministers, by various arts and expedients, keep up the appearances of a formidable power, that many men, who stood in high stations in the different courts of Europe, are, like some of your Lordship's friends in England, as much deceived and mistaken in their opinions of the present power of France, and in the same ridiculous degree as they have been partial to, and fond of, its language, its wines, its modes, its vices, and its follies.

So

So great indeed hath been the address and refined artifice of the ministers of France, in imposing upon mankind with the formidable appearances of their power, that, in confidence of the timidity of some former English ministers, we have had the mortification to see the *Pelhams*, more than once, sit trembling in their Chateau at *Lewes*, from a dread of an invasion ; when, in fact, as well as true policy, they might not only have pulled the mask from the enemy's face, and discovered their smile of ridicule at our absurd fears, but have thrown the French into a real and much greater consternation, by playing the same game actually upon them.

In this observation, my Lord, I am confirmed by the events that happened in the last war : the great statesman and commoner, who so happily and gloriously conducted that war, well knew the infinite resources of our own opulent country, and all the false pretensions to power and greatness of its vain and feeble rivals. That able minister, sensible of the strength
of

of Great-Britain and the weakness of France, soon convinced our enemies he was not to be imposed upon, like the *Pelhams*, with the false appearance of power : on the contrary, he, upon all occasions, treated them not only in the active part of the war, but in the farcical negotiation they began for peace, in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-one, with a dignity consistent with his own, and the honour of the nation, in whose service he was engaged : so far from being intimidated with their idle menaces of an invasion, he smiled with contempt at their ridiculous affectation, and bravely invaded and insulted them upon their own coasts ; which, after all their vain blusterings and seeming formidable preparations, they never had either courage or strength to put in execution upon ours. This invading them, upon their own coasts, my Lord, not only exposed their false pretensions to power, but also mortified their national vanity, and rendered them greater objects of ridicule in the eyes of their neighbours, than
all

all the other losses and disgraces they sustained in the war.

These successes, my Lord, of the ministers of France, have always arose much more from subtilty and refined address, in taking advantage of the favourable circumstances in the times, than from the weight and importance of their real strength and power: of the truth of which, the strange manner in which the present minister of France hath lately made the valuable acquisition of Corsica, whilst the nation is staggering under the burthens of the late war, is a striking proof: being sensible of the intestine troubles that now prevail, not only in England, but in every part of its extensive dominions, he well knows how to take the advantage of them. An acquisition so valuable as Corsica, and gained at so small an expence, hath given the minister (as his friends say) a supreme contempt for the councils of his rivals, and added greatly to the opinion of his own superior national strength and political address.

An

An unjustifiable invasion like this, upon an inoffensive state, and free people, in a time of profound peace, would, under different circumstances of the times, have roused the resentment of all Europe against them, whatever casuistry and sophistry they might have pleaded in defence of it. The whole world may remember, that their encroachments on the banks of the Ohio produced the first sparks of fire which lighted up the flames of the late war, that spread itself into the four quarters of the globe : such encroachment was surely of much less importance than the island of Corsica, from which, by its adjacent situation, the French can now constantly draw, at a very cheap rate, any quantity of the most excellent ship-timber they may want, for the supply of the royal navy at Toulon ; and which, before this acquisition, they had no other means of procuring, than what they could get, at an enormous expence, and a tedious delay of many months, from the groves of Norway.

An

An acquisition so valuable as Corsica, and obtained at so little expence, might flatter the vanity of a nation less susceptible of it than the French : but unhappily for the repose of Europe, the chief minister of France is so intoxicated with ambition, and conceptions of the superior power of his own country, and so ignorant of the real strength of his rivals, that he hath a knowledge yet to acquire, which of all others, is the most important and interesting for a wise minister to know.

What I mean, my Lord, is so happily explained by a noble author *, who wrote in this country, and whose letters I read with more pleasure, as I read them on the spot where they were written ; his observations are so judicious, so agreeable to truth, and so applicable to the present state of the English and French nations, that I will make no apology for quoting them.

“ The precise point of time, says this noble author, at which the scales of power be-

* Lord Bolingbroke.

tween rival nations turn, like that of the solstice in either tropic, is imperceptible to common observation; and in one case, as in the other, some progress must be made in the new direction, before the change is perceiv'd. They who are in the sinking scale, for in the political balance of power, unlike to all others, the scale that is empty, sinks, and that which is full, rises; they who are in the sinking scale, do not easily come off from the habitual prejudices of superior wealth and power, or skill and courage; nor from the confidence these prejudices inspire. They who are in the rising scale, do not immediately feel their strength, nor assume that confidence in it, which successful experience afterwards gives them: they who are most concerned to watch the variations of this balance, misjudge often in the same manner, and from the same prejudices. They continue to dread a power no longer able to hurt them, as the other continues to have no apprehensions of a power that daily grows more formidable. Spain verified this

this observation a little more than a century ago, when proud and poor, and enterprizing and feeble, she thought herself a match for France." And France, at the present time, my Lord, again confirms the observation; for exhausted as she is, by the same causes which reduced Spain, she does not perceive her scale of power sunk, but still entertains the same ambition and pride which formerly prevailed in the councils of Madrid.

The quarrels between modern nations, my Lord, are decided principally by a full and proper exertion of the finances of the contending parties; and the events of those numerous wars that have happened in Europe, since the discovery of the new world, are sufficient to convince every rational man, that those nations, which have the greatest resources in their commerce and wealth, will generally come off triumphant and victorious.

The brave inhabitants of Great Britain, are, my Lord, the only people in the world, who have ever united the know-

ledge and activity of war, with the laborious employments of agriculture and trade; and from these advantages alone, tho' they were but a handful of people compared to the number of their confederate enemies, supported in the last with the most astonishing vigour and success, the most active and extensive war that ever yet happened amongst the powers of Europe. The fame of our arms, like that of our commerce, was carried into the four quarters of the world, and the English banners were triumphantly flying even in the Manilla Islands, the most distant part of the globe. From the effects of our commerce and our wealth, we not only alone stood single in the quarrel against the united force of France and Spain, but nobly supported too the crowns of Prussia and Portugal, which tottered on the heads of those princes, before they received our support and protection.

The national credit of England, my Lord, which is so essential a cause of its power and greatness, is a discovery entirely

tirely new in the history of human affairs, and to consider it with all its amazing advantages, is the noblest monument of political wisdom, that ever yet was framed by mortal invention : it is not the abundance of the precious metals alone which constitute the riches of a State, as we may see by the present beggarly ruined situation of Spain and Portugal : those metals are no more than a representing *mark*, given in exchange for the wants and necessities of men : England, without a fatal possession of the mines of gold and silver, hath discovered a *mark* which represents them as effectually ; and was it not for fear of appearing too warm in my admiration of this amazing discovery, I would say, that the shirt of the meanest peasant, when worn to rags, may, by the art of manufacture, be fabricated into Bank-bills and government securities, of more intrinsic value than the revenues of Potosi and Peru ; for they, and the more precious stones that are dug out of the bowels

els

els of the earth, receive their value only from the opinions and estimation of men.

This credit of the French nation hath, on the contrary, my Lord, received so many fatal blows, by the wanton folly of the different ministers both in the last and present reign, that it is now no longer a resource of government; and from the want of this important succour, they received, in their last struggle with Great Britain, every distress and disgrace that could possibly attend the most unsuccessful war; she not only saw her commerce and marine entirely destroyed, but after those seeming vigorous efforts in the beginning of the war, which an absolute and a military government is, from the nature of its constitution, so well adapted to make, the vitals of the State were so soon exhausted, that so early in the war as the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty nine, she was reduced to the fatal necessity of shutting up her sinking fund, appropriated for the payments of the interest of her national debt, and to apply its
produce

produce towards the expences of the war ; and which, in spite of all the plausible excuses made by her ministers, was at best but a partial bankruptcy with her creditors, and did not fail to produce that effect ; for, after that violence done to good faith and public credit, she was compelled to give the most exorbitant interest for money to all from whom it could be obtained ; even for those sums that were borrowed upon the edicts, registered in the parliament of Paris, which then became the debts of the State. I have now before me proof, was it necessary, that she paid for it from ten to twelve per cent. interest ; and for those great sums lent by the corporation-towns, collective bodies of men, and the rich individuals, upon the king's personal security (a superficial mode of credit, which you in England are unacquainted with) the interest was still more exorbitant ; and for want of ready money to go to market for the supply of her armies and navy, the contractors for both did not make less than from
 sixty

sixty to seventy per cent. on their bargains : reduced as she was for want of money, she at last had no better resource than that contemptible expedient of melting down the plate of her people ; and which, from the most favourable accounts of the different mints, did not produce more than between six and seven hundred thousand pounds sterling : but the taxes were so exorbitant, so numerous, and so sensibly felt, that the load was at last become insupportable : for at the time of the peace, the people were even staggering under the burthen of a third vingtieme, and a double capitation : circumstances of such distress and oppression as had never before happened since the existence of that monarchy.

In a former part of this letter, I just hinted to your Lordship, that the power and internal strength of nations were best known by their wars and quarrels with their neighbours ; for then only they make a full exertion of their wealth and their finances : but whatever, my Lord, may
be

be the successes of a war, the advantages at last reaped from it, fatal experience hath shewn, are seldom adequate to the expences of the blood and treasure of it : for war is a game that may be played so many different ways ; it admits of so many various expedients, even with the neighbouring powers, not engaged in it ; the passions, the caprices, the follies, and even the different sentiments of wise men are so essentially concerned in, and mixed with its operations, that at the conclusion, it is, of all things, the most difficult to tear, even from a ruined and exhausted enemy, an equivalent for the loss of blood and treasure expended in it.

Our own nation, my Lord, hath acquired as much honour in its quarrels, as any other kingdom can boast of ; but the conquests, that bring glory to its armies, may also bring distresses upon the state, to which they belong. The country where I now reside, my Lord, hath gained more by some of its wars, within the last century, than any other nation in Europe :

E the

the trifling expence, both in blood and treasure, of the late acquisition of Corsica, is known to every one; the conquest of Alsace of Franche Comté, and of the Spanish low countries, by the late sovereign of France, and the important acquisition of the principality of Lorraine by the present, were, in no degree, as to expence of conquest, equal to their value and real estimation; which, upon the most moderate computation, as to resources of revenue, number of people, and advantage of situation, may be higher esteemed, than all the acquisitions we gained by those two obstinate and expensive wars, for the Spanish succession at the opening of the present century, and that which terminated at Fontainebleau in the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty three, though our arms, in both of them, were attended with the most brilliant and amazing success. But as we had made, in those two wars, as many great and important conquests, as could well be crowded into the number of years they lasted, I leave it
to

to the historians of future ages to enquire, why we did not draw from them greater advantages.

Insensibly, my Lord, I have wandered from the subject I first set out upon and proposed to entertain you with : but this digression, however long, will serve at least to convince your Lordship's friends, how greatly the state of the French nation appeared, by its conduct and resources, to be enfeebled and worn out by the late war, in comparison to the strength and vigour of the firm and robust government of Great Britain ; whose luxuries and vices have not yet enervated and unstrung the great principles of its constitution.

But should these general outlines of the circumstances of the two nations, during the violent efforts of the late war, have no weight in the opinion of your Lordship's friends, to shew that France is an exhausted state, I shall, to convince them of it, now enter into a more circumstantial detail.

Yet to avoid, as much as possible, prolixity, and tiring your Lordship's patience, I shall press my matter close ; and only give you those remarks in a general way, which your own good sense and knowledge of the subject will enable you to draw every necessary influence from. In this, my Lord, I shall follow the advice of the immortal author of the Spirit of Laws, who judiciously says, "*il s'agit de faire penser ; plutot que de faire lire,*" an advice, I have often been sorry, that hath not been followed by the writers of his own nation, who, to my great mortification and loss of time, have frequently reversed the wise maxim of the great author just alluded to.

The landed interest being the great fountain and source from which the power and opulence of the state, and the support and happiness of individuals, do, in every wise government, spring, I will, first, my Lord, begin with the present state of the agriculture of France.

The

The kingdom of France, my Lord, including the countries annexed to it, during the late and the present reigns, contains, according to the most exact calculations, about one hundred and forty millions of English acres, and the number of its inhabitants, according to the famous Marshal Vauban, are about twenty millions.

The compact situation of France ; its extent of country ; the advantages of its climate ; the richness of its soil, in producing, in some of the provinces, silk, corn, wine and oil, and almost every article to gratify either the necessaries or luxuries of life ; the beauty and grandeur of all the great roads leading from the most distant parts of the kingdom to the capital ; the advantage of so many rivers and canals, formed by nature and art, and particularly that of Languedoc, which is in length an hundred and sixty English miles, and lays open a communication between the Mediterranean sea, and the great western ocean ; the ingenuity, industry, and subordi-
nation

nation of its people ; its vicinity to Spain, and other nations, who, by inland carriage, take off their rich manufactures and other products ; the superior excellence of their sugar islands, which bring them an amazing profit, as they do not consume a third part of their product themselves ; the great encouragement given to the arts and sciences, and even to every trifling profession, that tends to polish and refine the exterior appearances of life ; the art of inviting and encouraging the subjects of the neighbouring nations into their armies and manufactures, by which their industry and number of inhabitants are increased ; and, above all, the infatuated fondness which all the Courts, as well as people of fortune in Europe, have adopted for the rich manufactures of France, and all the other products of tinsel shew and magnificence, for which the French nation have been so long famous ; and what hath still turned more to the advantage of France, few foreigners of rank and fortune are content with enjoying the modes and manufactures

manufactures of it in their own countries, but do, in some part of their lives, pay a visit to this land of luxury and politeness, to taste its pleasures and learn its language and manners; nor is the enormous sum of money, spent in France on these occasions, the only advantage the French reap from such visits; for foreigners acquire there such a fondness for the modes, manners and manufactures of that country, that they continue attached to them to the detriment of those in their own nations, for the remaining part of their lives; all these advantages, my Lord, are certainly great; and they have been extolled and founded high by the gay and giddy part of the nobility in our own as well as in other neighbouring states; but by none so much as the French nation, and the French ministers themselves; who, intoxicated with these superficial advantages, have neglected those in which their real power and prosperity were more deeply concerned.

Though the extent of country in France, and the number of its people are three
times

times as great as in England, yet, I am well convinced, that the annual produce of the landed interest in England is vastly superior to that of France * ; for with all the advantages of soil and climate, which they enjoy, their land is not half cultivated ; for the follies and vices in their government conspire together to prevent the progress of the landed interest.

It is from a want of wise maxims and laws, relative to agriculture, that the present landed interest of France is now sunk into such a low and consumptive state : Of what use have their numerous armies in time of peace been, but to destroy that very power they are so ambitious of supporting ? And though in the last, and in the present reign, they have added to their monarchy some great acquisitions, yet from the vicious and impolitic rules and

* The annual product of the land in France, is calculated by Vauban Mirabeau, and their ablest writers, at fifty millions sterling ; that of England alone, since our late amazing improvements, is valued at between seventy and eighty millions.

methods of their government, which they have established in those acquisitions, they have added very little real power to the state.

Unhappily for their neighbours, and the repose of Europe, the great object of the ambition of the French ministers hath always been to extend their territories, and neglect the improvement of the fertile soil, they had already in possession ; and which, in extent, is sufficient to support with food, and every necessary and luxury of life, more than double the number of their inhabitants. Had they extended their territories ten times as far, and, from a want of judgment and wise laws, neglected to procure a proper number of farmers and husbandmen to cultivate them, whatever reputation it might have given to their armies, which alone they are ambitious of maintaining, it would have added little or nothing to their internal power.

All the arts, subtleties, and superiour address, even of the ministers of France,

if

on

on which the French have almost totally depended for the aggrandizement of their state, cannot, without an industrious application to agriculture, procure food for their soldiers and people : and the government that neglects this most important of all advantages, must, whatever splendid appearances they may, for a short time, put on and deceive their rivals with, be in possession of a power very precarious and unsubstantial.

The efforts made by the great *Sully*, to cultivate and improve the landed interest of France, was attended with such success in his own time, and was in so flourishing a state, relative to the then neglected condition of our own, and other countries, that when Colbert, a little more than a century ago, was called into administration, the French supplied with corn, not only our own, but all the other markets in Europe.

But Colbert, not content with this great and permanent advantage, determined, in compliance with the vanity and ostentation

tion of his ambitious sovereign, to build the future power and glory of France on an encouragement of the fine arts, an establishment of sumptuous and costly manufactures, and all those other objects of taste and refinement, that are most subservient to pomp and luxury ; and this, with a design to lay all the courts of Europe under a contribution to his own.

The nature, principles, and benefits of commerce, being not at that time so well understood as at present, his plan appeared to superficial capacities, both plausible and wise : but to support this expensive new-adopted system, and bring it to perfection, he, for the sake of encouraging these manufactures in their infant-state, was reduced to the necessity of loading, by heavy and arbitrary taxes, the landed interest.

The errors of great men are, in affairs of government, much more fatal in their consequences than those of an inferior capacity ; thus Colbert, to encourage those

manufactures, upon which he hoped to build his future fame with posterity, had recourse to another operation, the most wild and extravagant that ever entered the head of a great statesman ; well knowing, that the price of manufactures will ever depend upon the price of labour, and the price of labour upon the plenty or scarceness of bread and other food, he erroneously concluded, that by entirely prohibiting the exportation of corn, it could not fail, in the event, to render it more abundant and cheaper in the market ; and by this means, that the manufacturer would be enabled to afford his industry at so moderate a price, as not to be equalled by their rivals in trade ; but by this false conclusion, he brought on a decline of the agriculture of France, and by his successors in power following the same mistaken conduct, the landed interest of France hath been thrown into such a languishing state, as the abilities of the greatest ministers may never recover it out of.

Whilst

Whilst the progress that agriculture hath made in England, since that time, and particularly since the law for allowing a bounty on the exportation of corn, is amazing; and is entirely owing to the mistaken conduct of our rivals on this important object.

Since the ruin of the landed interest in France, their ministers, when alarmed with a great scarcity of corn, and danger of a famine, have had no other resource, than, at the expence of government, to supply their magazines and public granaries from England, or some other country, rich with the products of agriculture, and retailing it again at a moderate price to their starving people.

Our own nation, my Lord, happier in its opinions and operations on this most important of all objects of government, hath, without public granaries, or any such trifling and superficial resources, discovered, upon the surface of the earth, mines of more real wealth and value, than the precious metals that lie concealed in
its

its bowels ; which, besides feeding our own inhabitants, and diffusing plenty and opulence through all ranks of our people, does not fail to keep the proud lords and proprietors of those mines, as well as our vain and haughty rivals, the French, in a state of dependance upon us for their very support and existence.

England, my Lord, is the only state, either antient or modern, that hath made wise laws and regulations for the increase and improvement of the landed interest : and experience hath shewn, that scarcity and famine have much more frequently happened in those countries, where the greatest precautions have been taken to guard against them, than in our own, where we even allow a bounty to our merchants to encourage them to export that very article of life, which is so necessary for supporting the existence of our own people ; a measure the most bold and intrepid that ever yet entered into the mind of a legislator, and which, at first, so staggered and surpassed the limited conceptions

tions of our rivals, that nothing but the amazing advantages, which have resulted from it to this kingdom, could have convinced them of its wisdom and utility.

Since the passing of that wise law for allowing a bounty upon the exportation of corn, and the farmers, from the happy effects of it, have been enabled to undersell other nations in foreign markets, when our own have been overstocked, our landed interest, and our national strength have increased to a degree unknown to any other country but our own.

This exportation of corn hath been so far from raising the price of it at home, as some people at first erroneously imagined, that it hath both augmented its quantity, and lowered its price, as may be seen by consulting the register of the price of corn for the last eighty years.

Happily for England, the effects of this bounty upon the exportation of corn, hath produced an increase of it, even more than equal to the increase of our national riches; and had it not produced that effect,

fect, the consequences of those riches, by increasing the prices of the necessaries of life, would have been more severely felt, and more loudly complained of, even than they have been ; for the price of the necessaries of life, as well as of the luxuries of it, will always be in proportion, and relative to the quantity of money, whether paper or coin, that circulates in a nation. When the productions of nature are, in any country, great and abundant, and money in that country is little and scarce, much of the former may be bought for a small quantity of the latter ; but when the money of a kingdom shall be plenty, either from a discovery of mines, or a large quantity of paper-money, which answers the same end as gold, shall suddenly be brought into circulation, as is the case in England, it is obvious to common sense, without the aid of political arithmetick, that a larger quantity of money must be employed to purchase the wants and necessaries of life, than when there was but a little cash in the
king-

kingdom ; and this increased state of the national riches in England, is, undoubtedly, the principal cause of the complaints of the common people, that every thing is grown so excessively dear.

The great trade which England hath long been in possession of, from the exportation of its corn, and the great balance it hath received in consequence thereof, was the reason that the scarcity of the harvests, which hath, of late years, been general in all the countries of Europe, was more sensibly felt by the people of England, than by those nations, who are more accustomed to such scarcity, and have not had the advantage of a foreign exportation.

However, during the last four years in France, the scarcity of corn hath been a very serious and alarming circumstance ; for their crops having fallen shorter than usual, and all other nations being unable to supply their wants, it did not fail to produce great anxiety and solicitude amongst the higher ranks of people, and

too often a state of riot and confusion amongst the lower.

The harvest of the present year hath been very favourable, and from the reports of those who have been employed by government to enquire into its productions, it is believed, there will be nearly sufficient for their annual consumption; for even France, my Lord, with all its advantages of soil and climate, and the full enjoyment of the trade of their costly and sumptuous manufactures, hath, amongst other nations, been laid under contribution to us, and in the midst of all her seeming grandeur, hath, within the last fourscore years, paid us near two hundred millions of livres of their money, which is a ballance of more than a hundred thousand pounds sterling a year. But this sum, your Lordship's friends will, with some appearance of truth, say, is but trifling, when compared to the enormous sums we have paid the French for their wines, their baubles, and their rich manufactures of every kind.

But the specific sum, acquired by the
balance

balance of trade, is not, as your Lordship well knows, of so much consequence to the power of a state, as the number of people, and the number of ships, it hath employed, and given a support to ; a few bales of the rich manufactures of Lyons, might have produced to the French a more considerable sum than this balance of our corn trade ; but he would be but superficially acquainted with the true advantages of trade, who should conclude, it was a matter of indifference to a government, or to a people, how the balance was produced.

The advantages arising from the landed interest, as I have before said, are more solid and permanent, and in which not only our support, but our very existence is immediately concerned ; whilst those, arising from manufactures, especially such as are subservient to luxury and ostentation, depend only upon the folly, the caprice, and the mode of the times ; and they too are easily imitated by other nations ; and however infatuated the nobility of our own country have been to the

splendid manufactures of France, the present taste and elegance of those now produced by your own rich fabricks of silks and velvets in England, are, I am convinced, by some patterns I have lately seen here, equal in beauty, and superior in quality to those of Lyons: and as other nations have also imitated them with good success, the superb city of Lyons, in which the famous Colbert had placed his future fame, hath, within my own memory, like the state of France itself, been sinking and declining so very fast, that now it manufactures little more than is consumed by the French themselves.

The proud city of Lyons, which hath long made so great a figure in trade and commerce, will, it is more than probable, soon experience the same fate, as the once opulent city of Seville hath met with; which, though now sunk from the vices of the Spanish government, into a state of poverty, had, but a century and half ago, according to Don Jeronimo d'Uztariz, a writer of great reputation, within its walls, not less than eight thousand
 looms,

looms, constantly employed in her costly rich manufactures, with which she supplied all the nations in Europe; and however formal and pedantic the present Spanish dress may appear in the eyes of refined moderns, Spain was at that time, in its dress, as well as its language and manners, the model for all the courts of Europe.

France, about the beginning of the last reign, succeeded Spain in these great advantages; and with them hath long carried her head aloft, and over-awed her neighbours; but as national modes are always taken from those states who take the lead in power, even the haughty court of France hath, since the last peace, laid down its antient pride and insolence to adopt our language, our modes, and our dress, though not our laws, and wise maxims of government.

Whatever, my Lord, may have been the fluctuating state of power in other countries, yet as England is the only nation, either ancient or modern, that hath fixed the basis of her power upon the landed interest,
it

it may be truly said, she hath laid the foundation of her power upon a rock. And from the natural advantages of its insular situation, its happy form of government, its wise body of laws, a marine that in power far surpasses any the world ever saw, and an extensive and useful commerce, not confined only to those objects that depend upon the changeable follies and caprices of mankind, but to those also of food and warm cloathing, which are the universal want of all nations ; tho' none but our own, from the quantity of corn and wool it produces, is able to supply them. From all these advantages, that we enjoy independent of and superior to every other nation, I shall not, I hope, incur the censure of any national partiality from your Lordship's friends, in declaring, that the power and opulence of the English nation are fixed upon a rock that will be as durable as time itself ; and not subject to decay and perish like that of the Spanish and French nations ; which were rapid in their rise and decline of greatness ; and who, after having thone with
sylen-

splendor and figured it awhile in the eyes of their neighbours, are now almost dwindled, “ like the baseless fabric of a vision,” into nothing.

At least, my Lord, we are convinced from the experience of the late war, that the foundation of our government is not to be shook by the confederated power of the feeble, though in appearance formidable, *paëte de famille* : and if ever we should fall into those ruins, which so many other nations have experienced, it must alone be produced by our own internal dissentions, our own wanton folly and madness.

The power and strength of all political societies depending entirely upon the laws and maxims of their governments, it cannot be wondered at, that France should have long been in a declining state ; for her ministers have attempted to raise a magnificent structure without the materials of the earth entering into the composition of it : the sandy foundation upon which it is built, hath been long evident from the dangers of famine to which their
people,

people, during the last century, have been so often exposed.

Since the time that Colbert's favourite system was adopted, of raising the national power by the precarious riches arising from the trade and commerce of manufactures only, their landed interest has been in a declining state; and so infatuated was that great man to this commercial idea, that he would, with pleasure, have seen all the labouring people in the country changed into artists and manufacturers ||. And, indeed, he laid upon those employed in the useful branches of agriculture such great and oppressive taxes, as soon compelled them to forsake a profession where they found it impossible, with the utmost efforts of industry, to procure a comfortable subsistence. Since that time more than two-fifths of the country-people of

|| A certain English ambassador at the court of France, upon visiting the famous manufacture of the Goblin's in Paris, was asked with a vanity peculiar to that nation, how he approved of the elegance of their tapestry? To which he shrewdly replied, that Colbert, to console the people for want of bread, had at least feasted their eyes and their imaginations.

France

France have, by the most moderate calculation, resided in the towns and cities : and this removal was perfectly agreeable to his wishes, not doubting, but the assembling great numbers of people together, would be of the greatest national advantage, by giving them imaginary wants, which, without the shew and display of vanity and ambition, they never would have had, by living unconnected in the sobriety of a country life.

Though the riches of a state may depend upon the industry of its people, yet they do not less depend upon wise laws in dividing the inhabitants into such classes as are most proper and necessary for supplying the wants and necessities of mankind : and though a manufacturer in France may procure, by his industry, a more easy and comfortable living for himself, than a husbandman employed in the toils of agriculture, yet the advantages arising from the latter, are infinitely more serviceable to the state ; as he, by his industry, creates a value that did not before

H

subsist,

subsist, and which is immediately relative to the support and existence of society : and every nation, who, like [the French, do not take care that their people may have a sufficiency of bread, and the first necessities of life, must always be in possession of a power that is weak and precarious. The proportion of the number of people in France, employed in their different manufactures, is, when compared to those employed in agriculture, and the numberless branches of industry relative to it, vastly unequal : but the arbitrary and oppressive taxes which the labouring people are exposed to, drive them from the cultivation of the land, to seek for a more easy and comfortable subsistence in those professions, which, so far from being useful and advantageous to the state, are a great expence and burthen to it.

The army, the church, the great body of the law, and its numerous dependants, the collecting the taxes, and the swarms of people employed in the king's farms of
the

the public revenues, drain the villages of almost one third part of their useful labourers.

Refined as the French nation is in all the superficial and exterior appearances and accomplishments of life, one cannot, without astonishment, look into all the absurdities and abuses of their form of government, and the unprofitable manner of employing their people.

But of all their absurdities, their method of imposing taxes for the service of the state, is the most absurd ; for those, whom they ought in good policy to tax, are exempted from taxation ; and those, who should be exempted from taxes, are most grievously burthened with them.

In France, the nobility, the gentry, the clergy, all the great proprietors of land, and every person holding any sort of employment under the state, are exempted from the *taille*, or the land-tax, whilst the inferior ranks of freeholders, and all the lower and subordinate classes of people, who, in common policy, ought as

much as possible to be spared, are oppressed by it in the most inhuman manner: even the day-labourers, who are not possessed of land, have a tax upon their industry, in proportion to what it is supposed they may, by the sweat of their brows, acquire: and it is a fundamental principle of the French government, that the lower classes of people must be kept poor, to secure their obedience to the state, and to force them to hard labour. This doctrine, however right and easy it may appear to ministers pampered with all the delicacies of life, is certainly carried to extremes, very inconsistent with true policy and the real interest of the state: for the peasants and labouring people, are, from their constant fatigues, and want of proper food to recruit their strength, exhausted and worn out, even before the age of fifty: the robust and full-fed people, who labour at the plough in England, would hear with astonishment, that the same classes of people in France, never taste any other reward for the sweat
of

of their brows, and the curse of their existence, than a scanty support of bread, and water, and roots.

Under oppressions like these, it is not much to be wondered at, that the peasants fly from the toils of agriculture to seek refuge in the towns, the army, or any other employments where a better support may be more easily obtained : and was there not such a strong and strict barrier, placed at all the frontier towns of the whole kingdom, to prevent any labouring people from passing, without giving security for their return, it is more than probable, that the French nation would be very soon deserted by all that class of people ; who, properly employed and treated, constitute the real riches of a state.

In despotic governments, the absolute power of the sovereign is delegated to all persons who are employed under the crown : and in France each province hath its tyrant, under the title of Intendant : to him an absolute power is given to govern its interior state, and to levy the *taille*,
the

the capitation, and such other taxes as are not included in the general farms. And in each parish, this despotic intendant hath a despotic sub-delegate, who, being acquainted with the fortunes and properties of his fellow parishioners, hath an absolute power to draw from them, not a certain and fixed rate in proportion to their several properties, but such sum as he shall be pleased to think they can, that year, spare for the service of the king; and the people think themselves happy, when this sum does not exceed eight shillings in the pound of their annual revenue, whether such revenue arises from property, or the effects of industry; and if the following year, the people should, by plentiful harvests, the efforts of industry, or any other favourable circumstances, improve their properties, still the king's collector hath a discretionary power to draw from them such a proportionate sum of that increase as he shall judge necessary for the service of the king.

This

This arbitrary and oppressive tax, which the French call the *taile*, had its origin in the feudal laws, and was a tax paid by the vassals in lieu of military service; and as the idea of vassalage and contempt is, by the superior classes of people, still annexed to those who pay it; and as every employment under the king, however subordinate it may be, gives an exemption from it, it is the object of every man's endeavours to get clear of what is so oppressive and contemptible.

The many fatal effects of this absurd tax, so flattering to those born in the rank of gentlemen, and so degrading and oppressive to those who pay it, have been long perceived by some of their wisest ministers; and more than once it hath been proposed to abolish it, and instead thereof to institute a land-tax of so many shillings in the pound, upon an estimate of the value of all the lands in the kingdom; and this tax not to be discretionary and in the power of the intendant to encrease or diminish, as his caprice or interest might direct,

rect, but to be at a determined and fixed rate in proportion to the value of the lands.

But many objections more plausible, than just, have always been made to this equitable proposal : the advocates for the continuance of the taille, under its present oppressive mode, assert, that from its long existence, it is become familiar and habitual ; and it is so interwoven with all the great principles of their government, that it cannot be now separated without new modeling the whole state ; that the privileges of the nobility, gentry, and those who enjoy an exemption from it, are, by length of time, so confirmed, that they would esteem it as the greatest injury imaginable, to be taxed under the same mode and form with the lower classes of people ; that it would break down and destroy those distinctions of rank, which have existed ever since the beginning of the monarchy, and have added so much to the splendor of the crown ; and that in absolute governments, the lower classes of people must be kept
in

in a state of indigence to force them to hard labour, and compel them to a due state of subjection to their governors and superiors.

Many other specious reasons, equally weak and ridiculous, as those before assigned, have been given in support and maintenance of this absurd and oppressive tax; but the true reason of its continuance, and why it will probably ever be continued, is the powerful influence, that the nobility, the clergy, and the great proprietors of land have in the affairs of government, and the particular advantages they enjoy by an exemption from it.

The nation who hath adopted principles of government like these, so repugnant to its landed interest, and who hold it as a maxim of policy to keep the lower ranks of their people in a state of poverty, can never be a formidable rival, either in time of peace or war, to a nation like England: and the French, notwithstanding all their encouragements given to the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and all the refinements of the pleasures and

J

luxuries

luxuries of life, are yet in a state of Gothick ignorance of that essential knowledge, which most contributes to the power and riches of a state, and to the prosperity and happiness of a people *.

The ministers of France have been so far from improving and cultivating their landed interest, as common policy would direct, that they have always thought the power of a state depended alone upon the strength of formidable armies : and their vanity to take the lead in all the important affairs of Europe, and their propensity to quarrel with their neighbours, have been the cause of their keeping up and supporting more numerous armies, than have been either consistent with their revenues, or real necessity : the old peace-establishment for the army of France was, till within these few years past, never less than

* The immortal Montesquieu has wisely observed ; pour l'état monarchique se soutenir, le luxe doit aller en croissant, du laboureur à l'artisan, au negociant, aux nobles, aux magistrats, aux grands seigneurs, aux traitans principaux, aux princes, sans quoi tout seroit perdu.

two hundred thousand men : but the enormous expence of it being of late more sensibly felt by the government than ever, it was, after the late peace, to the surprise and chagrin of all the old advocates for military power and grandeur, reduced so low as an hundred and twenty thousand men ; and which is a number surely more than doubly sufficient to garrison all their frontier towns in time of peace.

The great degree of honour that is annexed to the military profession in France, and the desire of avoiding every imputation of a want of personal courage, are the motives which engage the nobility and gentlemen of all ranks to serve the King in the army, almost at their own expence ; for the pecuniary appointments in the service are very unequal to the great expences of it : for all the officers, who are of opulent fortunes, go forth to war with so much pomp and splendor, and such an extravagant number of servants and horses, that they expose themselves, with great justice, to the ridicule of their enemies, who cannot see the use or benefit of so much

splendor and magnificence in a profession where they are very little wanted, and ought to be but little encouraged.

It hath been thought, by superficial people, a profound policy in the French government, to animate their troops to serve from a motive of honour, rather than a pecuniary reward; but this is not the only instance where the measures of the French government are plausible and advantageous in appearance, but yet produce very different and contrary effects: for troops must be properly supported, or they will never do their duty; and the daily pay of a French soldier, being only five sols, or two pence half-penny English, it is not sufficient to supply the wants of nature; and therefore the rest must be, some way or other, got from government, or from the industry of the labouring people: for he who supposes that a French army of an hundred thousand men are maintained at a less expence to their government, than the same number of English troops, considers the subject partially

tially, and as only relative to their pay, and without knowing the privileges, indulgencies, and exemptions, which are granted to the military profession in France, and which fall heavy upon the people.

Besides, for want of annual cloathing, and a proper healthy food to support the troops under the fatigues of war, the French hospitals soon become crowded with sick and disabled men, in a proportion of more than two to one, when the armies of both nations are equal in numbers; and few men but know, that a sick foldier in the hospital is of double expence to government to one that is in health, and able to do his duty.]

The enormous expence of the French military hospitals, during the late war, and of all their other contracts, both for the army and navy, when compared to our own, surpasses all belief; that some few of our own contractors accumulated great fortunes, is well known; but what even those few men got, may be said to be nothing at all, when compared to the
immense

immense fortunes, acquired by the French entrepreneurs ; nor is it to be wondered at ; for if men of high rank in the administration of affairs in France, will suffer their favourites and relations to require and accept of great considerations for obtaining lucrative bargains from the contractors of every species, it is not to be wondered at that such contractors should take every advantage of repaying themselves by plundering the state, when they can do so with great ease, and the utmost safety ? For all these contracts being made under the authority of the sovereign, no person whoever, dares to complain of their abuse.

In compliance with the national vanity and natural foibles of the French, the nobility and gentry in France, do, it must be acknowledged, ruin their fortunes in the army with great chearfulness and alacrity ; and in return for doing so, and the dangers they have undergone, every officer who hath served twenty years without reproach, is intitled to the military
order

order of St. Louis : and however trifling this bauble may appear in the eyes of the sober thinking people of other nations, the value of it is, by the arts of the ministers, kept up so high in France, that few gentlemen of fortune in that kingdom engage in the service with any other motive, than that of obtaining this badge of honour ; and which, to animate their troops during the last war, was so profusely given away by the court, that now the number of that order exceeds nine thousand ; for the officers of the navy, as well as those of the army, are equally entitled to it.

No sooner is this badge of honour obtained by officers, who are a little independent in their fortunes, than they retire from the service to enjoy their laurels in the circle of their friends and acquaintances : and this vanity, connected with many other follies of the military government in France, is the principal cause, that their officers are but little acquainted with the grounds and principles of the art
of

of war, in comparison to their rivals; where men enter the army, as a profession for life, and propose, by acquiring a thorough knowledge of their employments, to advance their future fortunes; a motive, which, of all others would appear the most unworthy to an officer in France, who ruins his fortune in the service, and in doing so contributes to the ruin of the state, only from the ridiculous motives of vanity, which custom hath established in that kingdom.

The immense expence to government, in supporting such a numerous army in time of peace, is not the only bad effect it produces to the state; for the superior degree of honour and respect, whichevery military man in France is intitled to, intoxicates all ranks of people, and makes them desirous of embracing a military life; and which, not being an employment in France, either favourable to the morals, or the virtues of useful sober citizens, they contract thereby such habits of gallantry and dissipation, as are very inconsistent

sistent with the stations and characters of discreet country-gentlemen and sober farmers ; in which capacities they would, by cultivating their lands and improving their paternal estates, be of infinitely more service to their country. Besides, all their common soldiers, being drawn from the great corps of husbandmen, are, from an absurd custom, not easily reconciled to common sense, inlisted to serve the king only for six years, which occasions a constant circulation of debauching* and ruining the morals and industry of the lower ranks of people ; who, by living that time in indolence and laziness, contract such habits as render them afterwards very unfit for the labour and fatigues of agriculture.

It is but justice to own, that the French are more free from the effects of religious

* A French peasant, that has been a soldier, when again he returns to live in his own village, then becomes a bully, a bravo, and a bad member of society : and the French king loses more of this class of his subjects by the sword, in one week, for they too are men of honor, than are hung up at Tyburn in one year.

superstition, than those of any other Roman Catholick country in Europe ; yet this does not proceed from a want of ecclesiastics to fill their minds with prejudices, but from their national levity : for though all the useles professions in France are abundantly stored with people, yet, the ecclesiastic profession, by far surpasses that of every other in number : for the younger sons of gentlemen embrace an ecclesiastic life, to enjoy in profusion and luxury the church-livings ; and the lower classes of people enter into it from a motive of laziness, and as an exemption from the toils and fatigues of a laborious life.

According to the most moderate calculation, there are in France no less than five hundred thousand of its subjects, of both sexes, constantly devoted to a life of religion and laziness ; who contribute nothing, either by their industry or population, to the benefit of society : the annual revenues of the church-lands, and those belonging to convents and religious societies, do, by a late estimate, amount

to eight millions sterling a year; and had not a law been made some years ago, to prevent ecclesiastics from either purchasing of more lands, or receiving from the weak and superstitious part of the people, legacies to the church, the priests and clergy would, by their pious frauds, have soon been in possession of three fourths of the lands and riches of the whole kingdom.

The church-lands, and the property in general of the clergy, being exempted from the greatest part of the taxes and burthens of the people, it is no wonder that such a collective body of men should be very opulent and rich : but the riches of the clergy in France, like those of the nation in general, are most partially and unequally divided. If the annual revenues of the church, which amount to eight millions sterling, were equally divided amongst five hundred thousand people, of which number the ecclesiastic community consists, it would bring to each the sum of sixteen pounds sterling a year,

which would be sufficient, at least, to procure them all the wants and necessaries of life; but in the great body of the clergy, there are no less than an hundred and thirty one archbishops and bishops, who, together with those of other superior orders in the church, enjoy enormous revenues; whilst all in the lower and subordinate classes, live in a state of want and indigence, derogatory to the character of clergymen, and do, with difficulty, procure the common necessaries of life; whilst those of the higher orders are pampered with all the luxuries and delicacies of it, and exceed all other ranks of men in the kingdom in splendor, profusion, and extravagance.

It hath long been the object of the French government, to prevail upon their clergy to submit to the same modes and forms of taxation with the other subjects of the state; but, from the secret and powerful influence they have ever had at court, that great political object hath never yet been accomplished: the clergy,
from

from the great power and riches they possess, consider themselves as *imperium in imperio*, and do, in their general assemblies, impose upon their own body such taxes, and such sums, as they themselves think requisite, out of their own revenues, to support the king's government: when this sum is thought by the ministers of state not equivalent to their possessions, they, to demonstrate their pretended zeal for the state, and avoid those contentions which might prove dangerous to their power, politically supply the rest by what they call a *free gift* *.

The excessive riches which are enjoyed by the higher ranks of the clergy, and the vast number of people in the lower classes

* It has often been proposed by the parliaments, to reform and diminish the enormous power and riches of the clergy; but the history of all nations, particularly those of the roman catholick religion, having furnished instances of the danger of attacking even the abuses of the church, the court have rather submitted to them, than inflame the sanguinary enthusiastick zeal of their Ravilliac's, their Clement's, or their Damien's.

that

that are supported in a state of indolence and idleness, are equally prejudicial to both population, and the progress of the landed interest; for the clergy, not being permitted to marry, are not so much interested to cultivate those immense quantities of lands they are proprietors of, as if those lands were in the possession of private citizens, who would, from paternal affection, exert their industry to provide for their posterity.

Of all the absurdities and follies in the French government, none have been the object of so much public clamour and discontent amongst the people, as the impolitic and oppressive mode of levying and collecting their taxes and public revenues: the customs, the excise, and many other branches of the public revenue are farmed out to a society of sixty men of the greatest monied interest in the kingdom. This contract is renewable every six years; and the present farmers pay to the king one hundred and thirty-two millions of livres, or six millions sterling a year, for the
pri-

privilege of plundering the state : the only advantage to the government attending the present mode of collecting these taxes, is, that the farmers or financiers advance to the king the annual produce of the farms before they are collected : but the perpetual state of indigence and want, which the government is in for money, is alone sufficient, one should think, for abolishing the continuance of a mode so pregnant with evils to the state, and oppressions to the people.

The collecting of the customs and excise in England, and the other branches of its revenues, which correspond to those articles included in the farms of the French king, cost the English government, according to a moderate computation, about ten or twelve per cent. upon the sum collected : but it hath been demonstrated, to the conviction of every unprejudiced man in France, that though the King receives from his farmers only six millions sterling a year, yet, by the amazing abuses and enormous profits of the farmers, the
people

people are charged with, and pay more than double that sum*: besides a loss to the state, in employing more than an hundred thousand of its labouring people in the subordinate ranks of custom-house officers and spies; who, from the virulence of the excise laws, and from a want of some judicious restraint or limitation, fret and teize the useful but unhappy people, with-

* A kind of political phrenzy seized the people in Paris, in the year 1764, to enquire into the abuses of the public revenues; and many sensible performances at that time were published, very little favorable, either to the integrity or abilities of the ministers. Amongst others, was a work intituled, *L'Anti-Financier*, which demonstrates, that the branch of the revenue, called, *Les Aides*, or *Excise* upon Strong Liquors, not even 20 per cent. of what was raised upon the people, came into the king's coffers: these enquiries were so very painful to the ministers, that they chose to thunder out an ordonnance, to forbid, under pain of the king's displeasure, any body, for the future, to comment upon those subjects which alone were cognizable by the king and his ministers: it is certain, no absurdity can equal the impolitick manner the French raise their revenues, but the profuse manner in which they squander them away.

out

out mercy ; and which the unfeeling farmers totally disregard.

In a government but desirous of shewing even the appearances of justice to its people, the great abuses and heavy oppressions, which are daily practised in this department, could not a moment subsist, if the *great officers* of the state were not *themselves* deeply interested with the farmers in the contract. It is well known, that no person had so great a share in these profits, as the favourite Sultana, the late Madame de Pompadour ; whose immense riches were acquired by being concerned in every transaction of government where money was to be got : and for the better accommodation of her passion for money, the late comptroller-general of the finances was raised to that important trust by her favour and protection only ; that she might have every possible opportunity of gratifying her insatiable desire of riches.

He, in return, proved to her an obedient servant and a faithful friend, by obsequiously conniving at her tools and de-

L

pendants,

pendants, buying up clandestinely the outstanding debts of the state, when fallen in the market to fifty per cent. below par, and then paying them at the treasury, when in her possession, at their original value : by such lucrative transactions as these, she, at her death, had amassed more riches than were in the possession of any other subject in Europe *.

Since the present mode of farming out the publick revenues was established in France, all the great monied men in the nation have turned their thoughts from trade and agriculture, the only sources of wealth to a state, to employ their fortunes in the money transactions of government ; and from the constant distresses of the king, the financiers, or monied men, enjoy alone the smiles and favours of the

* This enormous fortune, thus acquired by rapine and extortion, she left to her brother the Marquis de Marigini ; who, though born only in the rank of *Bourgeois*, was, by the influence of his sister, decorated with the *Cordon Blues*, though expressly against the rules of that order, which requires the proof of six generations of nobility.

court, whilst the landed interest is in so declining a situation, that the best estates are sold with difficulty, at twenty years purchase; and by a policy, not to be reconciled to common sense, the husbandmen, the labouring people, and every profession that contributes most to industry, population, and the real riches of a state, are oppressed and looked upon with contempt; and such things only encouraged, as are relative to shew, pomp and magnificence.

However necessary it may be, that the government and court of France should be supported with splendor and magnificence, the effects of it, it is certain, have been so universally spread, as to intoxicate the whole nation with the thoughts of nothing else but pomp and pageantry: the evil of this profusion and extravagance, is not solely confined to the king's household, though it is there most scandalously great; for in that department alone, a sum, more than equal to the amount of the land-tax of all England, when at three

L 2

shillings

shillings in the pound, is squandered away ; and it hath, more than once, been the subject of remonstrance from the parliament of Paris to their monarch, who have repeatedly declared, it was not the part of a tender parent, or an affectionate sovereign, to suffer such enormous and useless profusion in his household, whilst the poor industrious subjects of the interior part of his kingdom were reduced to the most deplorable state of misery, in contributing, by arbitrary oppressions, and the want of the very necessaries of life, to support that excessive splendor and extravagance*.

Though

* The first act of the present comptroller general, on entering the department of the finances, was, reforming the enormous abuses that prevailed in the king's household (*la maison du roy*) which includes, as in a private family, every branch of his domestick expence.

He found upon the list of the master of horse, no less than twelve hundred horses, charged to the king, at so moderate a price as five shillings sterling a day for the support of each ; but only nine hundred of these horses were found to exist in reality. In
the

Though it may be thought right and necessary to support the crown in every monarchy with a becoming magnificence, proportioned to the riches of the country, yet this fondness for pomp and shew hath been so extravagantly pursued in France, that it is the only object of emulation, which prevails amongst all ranks of the nobility; insomuch, that even the present chief minister, with a levity that

the master of the great wardrobe's accounts, was annually charged six hundred costly suits of cloaths for the king's use, which was thought to be fully sufficient for a prince, rather modest in his dress. Indeed, the master of the wardrobe, had a very plausible excuse to make for this seeming profusion, which was, that several dependants of the other ministers, were quartered upon his profits. Not to be prolix, the abuse of all the smaller articles of expence, throughout the whole household, were equally great, for no less than eight thousand pair of gloves were annually charged for the four Mesdames of France, the king's daughters.

This reform and infringement upon the perquisites of the courtiers, did not fail to raise in the palace as great a conspiracy against the new comptroller general of the finances, as if he had been the greatest enemy of the state.

would

would be more excusable in a *petit maitre*, than a great statesman, piques himself in saying, “ that his equipages and liveries are not only more costly than the king’s, but that his household also is so numerous, that the servants of his servants have servants to attend them *.”

In a nation where such excessive luxury as this prevails in all the higher ranks of its people, all the labouring industrious poor are kept in the greatest state of oppression to support it; where commerce, agriculture, and every useful profession are held in contempt, and the distinction of rank and nobility is the prevailing passion; and where the degree of noblesse may be purchased with a mode-

* The liveries of the servants of the minister, are, perhaps, more costly than the senatorial robes of the English peers. Is it to be wondered at, that in a nation where sentiments like these prevail, the landed interest should be lying in ruins: the money which ought to cultivate it, circulates only in canals of luxury; and the villages are drained of its inhabitants, which ought to supply the nation with bread and food, to be employed in those offices subservient only to pomp and magnificence.

rate

rate fortune, it is no wonder that trade and agriculture should decrease, and the degree of the noblesse become numerous.

The government of France hath itself greatly encouraged the national vanity of the people in their fondness for the rank of noblesse, for in an absolute monarchy, such as France, and where the distribution of property and fortune is so very unequal, that the people are but one degree removed from all the absurdities of the feudal laws, vast numbers of the noblesse must have been unavoidably created; but the French government have not been content with such increase; for, besides the antient * hereditary peers of the kingdom, and all the subordinate ranks of counts, marquises, and the proprietors of lordships and manors, who have always been, by their birth, intitled to the privileges of noblesse; the government have created a great va-

* The hereditary peers of France, who have seats in that assembly, are only fifty two in number; but the subordinate classes of the noblesse, exceed, upon a moderate computation, more than sixty thousand families.

riety of very unnecessary civil employments, to which they have annexed the privileges of noblesse; and which have been sold, and made a fatal resource of revenue, in times when the state hath been in great distress for money.

That I may as little as possible fatigue your Lordship's patience with the nature of these *charges* or civil employments, which from their number are now become one of the greatest burthens of the state in France, as well as an absurd resource of revenue, happily unknown in England, I will enter into such a detail only, as may convey to your Lordship an idea of the impolicy of their institution.

The *charge*, or rank, for example, of one of the king's secretaries, and of whom there are more than three hundred, is an employment merely honorary, and hath neither duty nor attendance annexed to it: These *charges* are generally purchased by the descendants of those, who, by their successes in trade or other circumstances, have acquired fortunes; and who, in compliance

pliance with the national vanity, are desirous of enjoying, by the privileges of noblesse, an exemption from the *taille*, and from that degree of contempt and oppression, to which they would have been exposed by continuing in the class of *Roturier*, in which they were born.

The purchase of this *charge*, or rank of one of the king's secretaries, is about five thousand pounds sterling; and produces annually to the purchaser no more than three and a half per cent. for his money; but to this *charge* is annexed honour and respect, and it is, like a freehold, hereditary in his family: but however advantageous this mode of borrowing money may appear upon a superficial view, it would not be difficult to demonstrate, that, by the privileges and exemptions annexed to these *charges*, and all the collateral disadvantages attending them, it would have been wiser in the government, and cheaper, to have paid ten per cent. for the money.

M

The

The unequal distribution of the lands, and of the riches in general of the French nation must, with so many other causes conspiring together, keep their agriculture in a miserable state : the power of the antient republicks, and of every wise nation, hath always proceeded from and depended on wise and solid laws and maxims : none but French ministers are so ignorant as not to know, that ten thousand acres of land, divided equally amongst an hundred different people, would not only be better cultivated, and afford so many families all the necessaries of life, but contribute more to the revenues of the state, than if they were only in the possession of one proprietor.

Notwithstanding the splendor of the Court of France, the profuse way of living amongst their first nobility, and the magnificence which appears in many of the cities and towns, there cannot be a clearer and stronger proof of the *radical vices*, and *real poverty of the state*, than those swarms of beggars that are every where to be seen through-

throughout the kingdom : but the oppressions of the labouring people, employed in agriculture, are so great from the excessive taxes, that they cannot, with the most violent efforts of industry, procure by it a tollerable support ; and begging at the gates of the convents and religious houses, where they distribute in alms, what is superfluous to their own wants, is a more beneficial and comfortable profession, than exhausting their strength in cultivating the ground, the fruits of which are torn from them to pamper in luxury and extravagance the higher ranks of people.

Wise laws and wise maxims of government can alone contribute to the improvement and encrease of the landed interest in any country : wherever that important object is properly attended to, there results from it, food, cloathing, riches, revenues, commerce, navigation, and every thing that raises and creates the real power and grandeur of a nation, and the prosperity und happiness of its people.

It is now more than a century, that the French nation have neglected and disregarded the state of their agriculture; and notwithstanding they have had, during that time, frequent famines, and always a scarcity of both corn and wool, they have even flattered themselves, that the advantages which they reaped in supplying all the courts and countries in Europe with their rich manufactures, and other objects of luxury, were more than a balance and equivalent for all such wants and disadvantages.

Experience hath, however, at last convinced them of their impolicy, and of the errors of their national prejudices. They beheld, with surprize, the prodigious efforts which England made, during the last war, and saw, with astonishment, that she raised the supplies for the last year with the same ease she had done those for the first; whilst France had exhausted its strength and its vitals, even in the first three years of the war: this could not fail to convince the present chief minister of
that

that country, who, though not possessed of the talents of a great statesman, hath a quickness of conception few men are endowed with : he justly concluded, that as France had for more than a century supplied all the courts of Europe with velvets, lace, brocades, and all the most costly and expensive articles of commerce, and yet was inferior to England in national riches, strength and power, that such superiority could alone proceed from the benefits arising from the more cultivated state of her landed interest.

The French, thus at last convinced of the advantages of agriculture, have, within a few years past, made every possible effort to raise their landed interest out of that declining condition, in which it hath so long lain : and as the example of the sovereign hath, in France, more influence with the people than the most positive laws, the king himself hath, of late, condescended to work at the plough, as an amusement, in the inclosures at one of his country palaces, and also hath lately been
several

several times present with the first nobles of his court, at some new experiments relative to agriculture, with the hopes of reviving a profession that tended so greatly to the power of his kingdom, and the happiness of his people.

It is well known, when the sovereign of France and his court, have adopted either a virtue or a vice, or even a mode of pleasure, it extends itself by degrees to the last ranks of the people in the kingdom: but whether the present taste for the pleasures of farming, adopted by the king, will be attended with that effect, time only can determine. The country gentlemen, however, are so sensible of its advantages, and the want of improvements, that in more than thirty different provinces, they have formed themselves into societies to promote the advancement of agriculture; and the best books in the English language on practical farming, have been translated into French, and dispersed *gratis* by these societies to the farmers,

mers, as a guide in the future mode of cultivating their lands.

And should the French ministry succeed in raising their landed interest from its present low and languishing condition, to a state like our own, then indeed, but not till then, the French nation would become a formidable rival to the power of England: but your Lordship's own experience will convince you, that all the operations of the French government, are more plausible in their appearances than profitable in their consequences. And whilst so many radical vices continue to infect every department of their government, whilst the clergy are in possession of so great a share of the landed property of the kingdom, which is exempted from the greatest part of the taxes raised for the support of the state; and whilst five hundred thousand people are maintained by that profession in indolence and idleness, and who contribute nothing towards industry or population; whilst the pleasures and luxuries of the court engage a constant

stant residence there of all the first nobility; and all the second ranks of people lead a life of pleasure and dissipation in the towns; whilst the husbandmen, and all the industrious labouring people lie under so many oppressions from partial and arbitrary taxes, and the whole country feel the deepest and most abject distress and poverty; whilst all ranks of people in trade are looked upon, and treated with disrespect and contempt, by those who live in a state of ease and dependance upon the government; whilst so many *charges*, or civil employments, are to be purchased by those who have acquired money in trade, and which give them the privileges of noblesse, and an exemption from taxes; whilst the general state of their commerce and agriculture hath not a tenth part of the money employed in their different branches, as those great causes of the power of a state require; whilst the greatest number of the people find it more honourable and lucrative to forsake the most useful employments,

ments, and to enter into the army, the law, the church, and the employments in the finances, all which produce no new encrease of power to the state; whilst the excess of luxury continues amongst the higher ranks of the people, and the labouring poor dare not marry for fear of increasing their burthens in life; and the people in general aim at nothing more than living single and independent by a life-annuity; whilst the interest of money is kept up so high, that it can be applied to more lucrative uses than either in trade or cultivating the land; whilst these vices and follies, my Lord, continue to exist, and all of them are so interwoven with the very principles of their government, as hardly to be seperated, there is no probability, that the French nation can ever be formidable to England by the progress of their landed interest.

And now, my Lord, I should proceed to speak of the present state of the mortgaged interest of France, and of its national debt; but it being rather too large a field

N

for

for one letter, and might be too tiresome for your Lordship's perusal, I shall reserve it for the subject of my next: yet, as your noble friends have very probably entertained too advantageous notions of the power of France in this respect, I shall so far enter into it, as to afford them some idea of it.

The discovery of the new world hath produced so great a revolution in the maxims of state, and the customs and manners of the courts of Europe, that their power and grandeur seem now to depend chiefly upon commerce and the acquisition of riches; yet, by a paradox to be reconciled only by the events that have happened, the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, who have been the sole possessors of the mines of gold and silver, have been, by the fatal possession, reduced to a state of indigence and poverty, whilst the commercial nations, who have acquired these precious metals from their proprietors by way of traffick, have, according to the proportion they have gained of them

them, increased in their strength and power.

The English and French nations being not only the two states in Europe, who have drawn the greatest advantages from the discovery of the mines in the new world, but rival powers also; and as the riches of a state are now deemed the strength of it, as the one will generally be in proportion to the other, it is of the utmost importance for the English nation to know the real quantity of the riches of its rival, France.

According to the best calculations of the quantity of gold and silver now circulating, or being in France, it amounts to between sixty and seventy millions sterling: this sum, though large, is not sufficient, from the impolicy of the government, and its unequal distribution to support all the luxuries of the nation, to cultivate an extent of land of 140 millions of acres, and to put in motion the industry and commerce of twenty millions of inhabitants; nor have the French one

third of a capital employed in their agriculture, or their commerce, that those objects would require to put them on as good a footing as those of England: the industry and the progress of the power of a nation, depend principally on the riches of it, and of their being properly employed; and however paradoxical it may appear, it might not be difficult to prove, that was the French nation double in extent of land and number of people, without any increase of gold and silver, it would then be doubly poor and indigent to what it is at present: for every acre of land, as well as the industry of every individual, requires a certain sum of money to put it in action, and as the profits arising from two hundred pound employed in agriculture or commerce, will be double to those arising only from one hundred, so the nation that abounds most in riches, and employs them on those objects, that produce other riches, that did not before exist, will have a power superior to another nation that less abounds in money.

ney. By taking the general mass or sum total of the riches of a nation, and comparing it with the number of its inhabitants, we shall easily find, whether the nation hath riches sufficient to put the industry of its people in motion.

On a supposition therefore that the money circulating, or being in France, amounts to sixty millions sterling, and that this sum was equally divided amongst twenty millions of people, then each individual would have no more than three pounds to put his industry and ingenuity in motion : but this, or even a less sum would be sufficient for the purpose, was France unconnected in every respect with other nations, and did not so constantly contend with, and attempt to rival England both in peace and war ; for it is then that our superiority and advantages become so evident.

Though the sum total of the circulating cash in England, is computed at no more than twenty millions sterling, yet, by the wisdom of its government, and its punctuality

tuality in preserving its publick credit; she hath established such a resource of paper-riches, as, in every respect, answers the same end as the metals of gold and silver: these paper-riches, added to the sum of its circulating cash, create a sum total constantly in circulation of one hundred and sixty millions sterling; and which, being divided equally amongst six millions of its people, gives to each individual, the sum of twenty-seven pounds to put his industry and ingenuity in motion: and this is the principal cause of the advantages and the great superiority we enjoy over France as a rival nation.

During the existence of the Mississippian scheme in France, in the years 1718 and 1719, there were more than three hundred millions sterling of paper-money circulating in that kingdom; and which produced in France the same effects for that short time, as our increase of riches have produced in England: for there was, during that time, such an industry and activity among the people, as was never known

known before in France ; lands, that are now sold for twenty years, were then increased to eighty and ninety years purchase.

But the foundation of that scheme, being neither built upon the principles of wisdom, nor conducted agreeable to justice, its fall was as rapid as its rise had been : it was a magnificent structure, raised upon a sandy foundation in two years, which would have required two centuries to have brought it by degrees to perfection. The great principles upon which it was attempted, were judicious, and it failed principally through the follies of those who were concerned in it, and the vices inherent in an absolute government. The national credit of France, received upon that occasion such a fatal wound, as will ever prevent it from being again a resource of government : and as it will be impossible for France ever to acquire a sum of gold and silver equal to our paper-money, she must for ever remain

main in a state of inferiority, when compared to England.

Great as the inconveniences are, which France experiences from the want of a larger sum of riches in the nation, yet this want is greatly increased by the unequal distribution of the riches they are in possession of ; for whilst some few persons are enormously rich, and spend their riches in the most profuse luxury, all those professions that are most useful to the state, have not a tenth part sufficient to carry on their different employments.

Nothing hath contributed more to exhaust the French nation of its finances, than the frequent and expensive wars in which they have, during the last century, been engaged ; and though their armies carry the appearance of being maintained at a less expence than those of other nations, yet the great abuses which prevail in all their contracts, and in every commercial branch relative to supplying the army, make the expences of supporting it superior to that of any other country.

In

In France, it is the object of every man's wish to enjoy a pension under the king; it is not the emolument only, that is the motive of this desire, for though a court pensioner is in England, rather a term of disrespect, yet in France it is esteemed an honour so great, that every man aspires to it, who is fond of fame: and the number of pensioners are now so vastly increased amongst all ranks of the people, from the princes of the blood down to ingenious mechanics, as to become a great, and, in the present deranged situation of their finances, a most insupportable load upon the state.

Though it is both wise and just in a monarch, to whom the riches of a state are trusted, to recompence such men of talents and abilities, as have by their studies and inventions promoted what is useful, and served and advanced the conveniencies or interests of society, yet, it must be confessed, that the able and ingenious in France, who have most deserved the recompence of the court, are those who enjoy the least part of its favours.

Out of more than a million sterling, which the king of France annually pays in pensions, the greatest part is swallowed up by the indigence of the great people, who surround the throne, and the favourites and dependants of that perpetual succession of ministers, who have trod upon each others heels since the death of cardinal De Fleury.

The king's pensions have, since that time, been so scandalously prostituted, that it hath not been for the services which men of talents and distinguished merit, have rendered to the state, that have entitled them to pensions from the king, but the favour and patronage of the different ministers to their own dependants and parasites : if a man has been able by his skill in cookery, to please the languid appetite of a decrepid worn-out minister, in inventing a particular sauce, or hath any ways contributed to revive his expiring passions, or in procuring him some personal pleasures, it hath never failed by the influence of his patron, of obtaining him a pension from the king.

This

This abuse was so great, and its burthen upon the state so sensibly felt, that when M. De Silhouette* (the only wise revenue-

* M. De Silhouette, who acquired his knowledge as a revenue officer, by a long residence in England, was rather a favourite of the parliament, and the people of Paris, than of the ministers of the court: in the midst of their distresses and want of money, in the year 1759, when the king could procure none but upon the most exorbitant interest; he proposed to the court, to borrow twenty seven millions sterling, at six per cent. with a premium, if the court would consent to the *mode* of borrowing it by the parliament, who offered to be guarantee to the people, for the security of the money; but the court unwilling to give an importance to the parliament, which it was not entitled to, refused the offer, and had recourse for money to more ruinous measures: in truth, by the original constitution of the French government, the parliament of Paris is extremely limited in its power: they can, it is true, remonstrate, and even refuse to enregister the king's edicts; but if the sovereign presents himself in parliament, and holds what they call a *lit de justice*, a prerogative which the monarchs of France are tender of exerting, then his will becomes the law, even without the consent of parliament.

Great as their contentions have been of late, there was a time, even within these few years, that the

venue-officer, the French have long had) came to the administration of the finances in the year 1759, he found himself under a necessity to prevail upon his sovereign to issue an ordonnance for all those who held pensions under the king, to deliver in a declaration, and specify expressly therein, the services they had done, to entitle them to them; and a proper court of justice of the revenue-officers, was appointed to enquire into the validity of their services, and by what means such pensions were acquired.

This enquiry opened such a scene of fraud, artifice, and abuse, as would, to any other nation but the French, have appeared most scandalous and unjust; yet so powerful was the influence of the patronage,

court shewed a great disposition to the parliament, both of reconciliation and harmony: but it soon appeared, that the more concessions were made to a body of men, accustomed to submission and obedience, the higher they rose in their expectations and demands; and then aimed at almost the same power and dignity as the parliament of England; since that time, the court have received their remonstrances with a becoming form and ceremony, and paid them no attention.

tronage, which the favourites of the court had upon this occasion, that even in this enquiry, so just and equitable, and at a time when the nation was distressed for money, and then staggering under the burthens of the war, that able minister could procure for the state but very small advantages, where so many great abuses were demonstrated; and the pensions of those only were diminished, who had the best pretensions for their continuance, whilst those who had proper patronage amongst the courtiers, escaped without any reduction: in France, those who promote the most useful arts which are relative to the advancement of agriculture and commerce, on which alone the riches and power of a state depend, are neglected and unrewarded; whilst enormous sums of the public money, arising from the sweat of the brows of the industrious and laborious poor, are applied to support the luxuries and elegant dissipations of those who surround the throne, and are most profusely squandered away upon the idle, vicious, and extravagant.

No-

Nothing contributes more towards diminishing the use and advantage of the gold and silver metals which the French acquire by the balance of their trade, than their own consumption or method of applying such riches. All the nations in Europe united together, have not so great a number of artists employed in the gold and silver trade or manufacture, as in France: as pomp and shew is the prevailing and darling passion of all ranks of people in this country, those of a middling state of life abound more in plate than those of a much superior rank in England, who are satisfied to be served in china, or the fine earthen wares; and these immense quantities of plate, which are so excessively abundant in all the families of the first distinction, as well as of all other ranks of people, are as useless to the government, and of as little benefit to the nation, as if they still continued in the mines from whence they were extracted.

It is computed, that the gold and silver plate in France, including that belonging to churches, and the immense quantities

quantities employed in family uses by the extravagant vanity of the people, in decorating all the utensils belonging to the common necessities of life with them, does not amount to a less sum than between sixty and seventy millions sterling, which is equal to the sum total of their circulating cash; if this sum, or even one half of it, was employed in improving their agriculture or their commerce, it would be of infinite advantage to the state: But it is the foible of the French nation to vie with, and emulate each other in pomp and profusion.

That able financier, M. De Silhouette, was so sensible of the disadvantages attending the application of so vast a quantity of gold and silver to domestick uses, and for the sake only of pomp and luxury, that an invitation was made to the people, during his administration, to shew the zeal for the state, by bringing all the superfluous part of their gold and silver utensils to the mint, to have it coined into circulating cash; one half of its value was to be paid in ready money, and the

the other half to be lent to the king at four per cent. But such was the fondness of the people for their gold and silver utensils, that, though the scheme was conducted under every advantage to excite the people's patriotism, by publishing the names of those who shewed their zeal for the government by bringing in their plate, yet it did not produce more than six hundred thousand pounds sterling.

The quantity of money in a nation may be guessed at by the interest which people pay for the use of it ; for the interest of money is dependant upon the quantity of it in circulation : when money is very plenty, interest will be low ; when it is scarce, interest will be high. It is of the highest advantage to a nation, when the people of it can borrow money at a low interest, for then they may borrow it and employ it, either in trade or agriculture, and get thereby sufficient to live upon, besides paying the interest : but such is the general want of money in France, that it is with more difficulty procured there at six per cent. interest, than in England at four.

Having

Having given your Lordship in the foregoing, only a brief and concise view of the riches of the French nation, I shall, as soon as my health and time will permit, send you a particular estimate of the present state of the monied interest in France, the circumstances of their national debt, and every thing that is immediately relative to their revenues, their finances, and their resources of government; for as the real strength and power of rival nations is best known by a comparison of their revenues and resources, your Lordship's friends will then be convinced, that the present state of the finances of France is in a more deranged and exhausted condition, than even the state of its landed interest; and yet, by the superior address and ambition of the minister, the French still keep up the appearances of a formidable power, but which can impose upon those only who are easily deluded, and take appearances for realities.

Celebrated as the French nation hath been in some periods of the last century, for ministers of superior address and abilities,

lities, none of them ever equalled their present chief: I shall therefore conclude this letter, by giving your Lordship a short description of the character and conduct of the present first minister.

He is a man of excessive ambition and intrepidity, and of a most refined address; and though brought up in a life of pleasure and dissipation in the army, and was, at the time he came into power, unacquainted with the first rudiments of government, yet, by the favour of his sovereign, he was entrusted to conduct both the late war, and the late peace. Born of a family in Lorrain, more distinguished for its antiquity, than its opulence; he, soon after he came into power, surpassed all the other nobles in splendour and profusion; and became in a little time so intoxicated with pomp and ostentation, as brought upon him the envy and hatred of all ranks of his fellow-subjects. With a success never equalled by the great Richieu himself, he hath trampled under foot the power and jealousy of all the princes of the blood; the discontents of the army;

my ; the complaints of the hydra-headed clergy ; and the resentments of all the collective bodies of men in the whole kingdom. Equally successful in extricating his country out of a most unfortunate war, as in framing a formidable confederacy of all the princes of the blood of Bourbon into one family-compact, and reconciling the jealousy and hatred that had long subsisted between the courts of Vienna and Versailles, he now enjoys in full possession, a power, with which he would, like Louis, the fourteenth, insult all Europe, but that he is conscious, the resources of his country are too much exhausted to support his boundless ambition in any expensive projects.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's,

&c. &c.

P O S T S C R I P T.

Chantelou, Feb. 6, 1770.

IT is now more than two months, since I first sat down to write your Lordship the above letter, but the frequent intervals of bad health, have, till now, prevented my finishing it.

I well remember, it was an observation your Lordship frequently made, during your residence on this side the water, that the happiness of every state, particularly of those states, where the sovereigns are absolute, intirely depends on the personal characters of those men who are principal actors in the affairs of government: it may be allowed me then to remark, that some of the most judicious men in this country, who lived in the time of the regency, and with whom I frequently converse, pretend
to

to find a strange resemblance in the characters of the present chief minister, and the late regent of France.

The administrations of both, it is certain, form very interesting periods in the history of this country.

The present chief minister of France, *they say*, without the knowledge or the sagacity of a profound statesman, has ventured upon a career of such despotick conduct, as the most intrepid of their former arbitrary ministers, would have trembled at: so great, they add, is his contempt for the wise maxims of policy, transmitted down by his predecessors in power, that like the regent, he is alone guided by the influence of power, and by events and occurrences as they happen.

But this pretended resemblance, it must in charity be supposed, is stronger in their political, than in their private characters; for if credit may be given to a noble Lord of our own nation, who, during his exile in this country, was often, it is said, the regent's companion in his nocturnal
revels,

revels, he was not a pattern of the strictest virtue.

“ The successor (says this noble Lord *) to Louis the fourteenth of France, not to the throne, but to the sovereign power, was a mere rake, with some wit, but no morals; nay, with so little regard to them, that he made them a subject of ridicule in discourse, and appeared in his whole conduct, more profligate, if that could be, than he was in principle.”

The present chief minister of France,
 * * * * *
 too strong in power to attend to the remonstrances of the parliaments, or the murmurs and complaints of the people, pursues those objects of administration, which caprice, folly, or the convenience of the present moment alone dictates.

It was thought by all the sober thinking men in the nation, a violent exertion of power, when in the month of December one thousand seven hundred and sixty four,

* Bolingbroke's idea of a patriot king.

four, the national creditors were defrauded of ten per cent. of the interest of that money, which under all the legal forms of the constitution, had been lent to the king to support the state in its wants, and distresses.

That tax of ten per cent. was laid under a plausible pretence of forming a *caisse d'amortissement*, to liquidated and pay off the debt of the state, but tho' it has not produced less than six hundred thousand pounds sterling a year, so far from being employed to the use of its institution, it has been profusely squandered away in acts of generosity, to support the brilliant dissipations of the needy dependants of the court; and the king, by an edict of the last month, has now, for eight years, appropriated it to pay his own personal debts. When that *caisse d'amortissement* was established, M. De L'Averdy, the late comptroller general of the finances, a member, and great favourite in the parliament of Paris, for the activity he had shewn in the destruction of the jesuits,

then

then had so much influence with the court; as to procure a committee out of the body of the parliament to be the trustees, and administrators of the new sinking funds, independant of the ministers of the court; but such is the seduction and influence of the court of Versailles, that the committee itself, soon became as obsequious courtiers as the minister could wish.

But the operation of the finances in the month of December, one thousand seven hundred and sixty four, violent and arbitrary as it was, is now buried in oblivion, by the greater despotism of some late *arrets* which have caused a strange consternation amongst all the creditors of the state.

By the *arret* of the eighteenth day of the last month, it deprives of any future advantages, the proprietors and successors of all the tontines, existing from the year 1709 to that of 1759 included, which proprietors are now limited to receive their annuities only, without any encrease from the death of others.

By

By the arret of January the 20th, those debts which were borrowed by the king, under all the legal forms, at five per cent. interest, are now, by an act of power, for the future, to be only paid at two and a half per cent. without offering to the national creditors, their original debt, if they were not satisfied with a reduction of the interest.

The last arret, which this day appeared, dated January the 29th, is a tax upon the pensions paid by the king ; those amounting to the sum of six hundred livres, shall pay a tax of two shillings in the pound ; those from six to twelve hundred livres, half a crown ; those from twelve to eighteen hundred, four shillings ; and those of two thousand four hundred livres and upwards, shall pay six shillings in the pound.

The arret, my Lord, of January the 20th, has thrown the whole nation into a consternation, not to be expressed, and besides the injury done to private individuals, has laid the axe to the root of their

Q

future

future credit, for now, to use an expression of the judicious Montesquieu, “ they have cut down the tree to gather the fruit.”

These arrets, cruel and despotic as they are, is only a prelude to some others, which are daily expected to appear, and which, from the distresses of the state, and the caprice of the ministers, may, perhaps, be as tyrannical as that detestable edict, thundered out by the late regent in the year 1719, by which every private citizen in the state, was compelled, under *pain of death*, to bring into the king’s treasury. whatever sums of money he was possessed of, that exceeded five hundred livres.

Already five edicts and arrets, concerning a reform, and regulations in their finances, have appeared, during the course of the last month ; and ten more relative to the same subject, are expected within a few months more ; the next edict, it is presumed, will be a tax upon coaches, livery-servants, upon parks, and hunting forests ;

forests ; which hitherto, with most of the other objects of luxury, have escaped any contribution to the expences of government ; the particulars of the future edicts and arrets, and the effects they will produce, shall be the subject of a future letter ; till then, my Lord, once more, adieu.

F I N I S.



